

# **Route 17 Corridor Revitalization**

Recommendations for Action



**Report and Recommendations Prepared by the  
Route 17 Revitalization Committee**

**November 2003**

**FINAL**

## **Route 17 Revitalization Committee**

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Nick Barba	York County Planning Commission
Cynthia Barbeau	York County Beautification Committee
Brad Berrane	York County Industrial Development Authority
Dana Burgett	York County Master Gardeners
Donald Davis	Route 17 Business Owner
Paul Garman	Route 17 Business Representative
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Carl Loveland	York County Chamber of Commerce
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## **Introduction**

In February 2003, the Board of Supervisors conducted a goal-setting retreat and re-affirmed its commitment to improving the Route 17 corridor. This has been an often-expressed goal of the County for many years, and there have been varying opinions and interpretations as to what needs to be “improved” and how the “improvements” might be accomplished. This current initiative, however, is intended to assimilate all the previous discussions and initiatives, as well as new ideas and proposals, into a specific action plan. In its work session discussion, and in subsequent discussions since the February retreat, the Board left no doubt that it intends for this current initiative to result in specific actions, and that implementation should occur sooner rather than later.

With this goal established, the Board assigned primary planning and implementation responsibility to the Industrial Development Authority (IDA). The IDA promptly established a committee, chaired by one of its members, Mr. H. J. (Junior) Coxton, to accept the challenge of developing an action plan for recommendation to the Board of Supervisors. This Route 17 Revitalization Committee has met regularly since March 2003 and the information and recommendations contained in this report are the product of the Revitalization Committee’s efforts and discussions.

## **Background**

In the mid-1990s, the Board of Supervisors contracted with the Cox Company, a Charlottesville-based planning consultant, to analyze the economic vitality, aesthetic quality and natural assets of the Route 17 corridor and to prepare recommendations for its enhancement. Among other things, this study recommended the investment of public funds to implement landscaping enhancements in the medians and along the shoulders of Route 17. This recommendation served as the catalyst for the median and shoulder landscaping improvements that were installed south of the Route 134/Route 17 intersection in 2000. As those landscaping improvements continue to mature, they demonstrate the extremely positive impact that a comprehensive planting plan can have. However, landscaping cannot cure some of the basic problems that lie beyond the right-of-way line along the corridor. Identifying and recommending ways to turn those issues into opportunities was the main focus of the Revitalization Committee and this report will document that effort.

## **Process**

The Revitalization Committee began its work by assembling maps, photographs and other documentation concerning the existing and previous character of the Route 17 corridor. Additional baseline information was compiled, including a video and still-shot record of all the existing land uses along the approximate 11-mile Route 17 corridor stretching from the Newport News city line to the Coleman Bridge. These photo records, as well as current and 1974 aerial photographs, tell a story about the evolution of Route 17 as the [lower] County's principal transportation artery and commercial "Main Street." In some cases, the images paint a very positive picture – of successful, thriving, long-standing and attractive businesses – while in other instances the picture is not as positive, as evidenced by abandoned, boarded-up and overgrown properties where multiple businesses have started and failed time and again.

York County, of course, is not the only locality interested in corridor improvement and the Revitalization Committee has undertaken a concerted effort to learn from the experiences of other jurisdictions – both through site visits and document research – so that their successes can be imitated and adapted for use on the Route 17 corridor. Doing so has proven fruitful and the observations and recommendations contained in this report are the result of that research and discussion process. Throughout this process, the Committee has been guided by a desire to integrate citizen and business input and ideas to develop, disseminate and

implement community development practices and programs that result in more attractive, convenient and profitable use of the Route 17 corridor.

### **Description of the Corridor**

As noted above, Route 17 stretches approximately 11 miles from the Newport News city line to the York River. Since the first zoning ordinance was adopted in 1957, the majority of the corridor has been zoned for commercial use. Typically, the commercial zoning covers only those parcels that have frontage on Route 17, and most of the parcels are approximately 250-300 feet deep. Commercial land uses encompass a full range of retail, service and office establishments.

Currently, there are approximately 420 commercially zoned parcels that have frontage on Route 17. They encompass a total of almost 800 acres, which is almost 17% of the total commercially zoned land in York County, and represent a total assessed value of \$261,491,800, which is 34% of the total assessed value of all commercially zoned property. From a real estate tax standpoint alone, they generate approximately \$2,248,000 in annual tax revenue for the County.

While much of the corridor is zoned and used for commercial purposes, some single-family detached residential uses remain as isolated examples of its past character. Some former residential structures have been converted to commercial use, while others remain in use (under nonconforming / “grandfathered” status) for residential purposes. Also interspersed along the corridor are several churches, public schools, and conservation areas (the Newport News Waterworks property and the Colonial National Historical Park). The latter ensure that certain portions of the corridor will remain as permanent open space/green space.

The 1996 Route 17 Corridor Master Plan (Cox Company) contains a comprehensive listing of problems and opportunities associated with the corridor. These listings have been reviewed by the Revitalization Committee and are presented below in paraphrased form along with supplementary observations made as a result of the Committee’s recent discussions.

### **Overall Corridor Image**

#### ***Positives***

- *A historic retail corridor serving the community, tourists and commuters.*
- *Interest and support by citizens, business groups, and County Government in preserving its economic viability and making it more attractive.*

- *A positive mix of businesses and services.*
- *Opportunities for renovations and infill redevelopment.*
- *Existence of the Colonial National Park and Newport News Waterworks property provide protected greenways.*
- *Landscaping improvements installed in medians several years ago are beginning to mature and enhance corridor appearance.*
- *Newer developments show benefits and value of the site design standards established by County within past 20 years.*

### ***Opportunities for Improvement***

- *“Gateways” at both ends of the Corridor could be enhanced.*
- *No “sense of place.”*
- *The corridor’s automobile orientation (vs. a pedestrian scale/orientation) necessitates expansive asphalt, and large number of curb cuts.*
- *Poorly organized parking and undefined street edges.*
- *Inconsistent landscape treatment on private properties.*
- *Inconsistent architectural character, scale, materials, setback, etc.*
- *Unattractive, poorly maintained signage, both on the right-of-way and on private properties.*
- *Poorly maintained properties and rights-of-way.*
- *Numerous abandoned buildings.*
- *Unsightly overhead utility lines.*
- *Difficulty in seeing property addresses.*

## **Streetscape Conditions**

### ***Positives***

- *Some segments have adequate space in the right-of-way, including highway median, for landscaping and other streetscape elements.*
- *Some very good examples of landscaping at the street edge.*
- *Curb and gutter and underground storm sewer in some segments.*
- *Some existing older, visually effective landscaping, specimen trees and tree stands.*
- *Segments of publicly controlled land outside of right-of-way ensure permanent open space/green area and tree retention.*

***Opportunities for Improvement***

- *Some segments currently lack adequate space for landscaping in the right-of-way, particularly considering planned future highway widening.*
- *Inadequate public landscaping and maintenance.*
- *Open ditch segments are unsightly and difficult to maintain*
- *Excessive and overly wide driveway entrances; extensive asphalt.*
- *Unscreened parking and asphalt areas in front of business establishments.*
- *Few street trees and public landscaping.*
- *Inconsistent spacing of streetlights.*
- *Unsightly overhead utilities.*
- *Faded, damaged, leaning and overabundant regulatory, warning and route marker signage by VDOT.*
- *Inadequate right-of-way maintenance (litter, clogged ditches, pavement condition, etc.).*

***Private Land Use, Landscaping and Parking Conditions***

***Positives***

- *Parking areas at the sides or rear of buildings to decrease visibility.*
- *Landscape screening of parking areas.*
- *Some existing examples of private landscaping of good quality and good maintenance.*
- *Adequate private frontage space for future landscaping and screening.*
- *Many sites have sufficient unused land available for redevelopment and/or site reorganization.*

***Opportunities for Improvement***

- *Inadequate landscaping and shade trees with excessive paved areas.*
- *Poorly maintained landscaping.*
- *Poorly organized parking areas with a lack of landscaping and screening.*
- *Private land uses and access arrangements encroach on existing and planned public rights-of-way.*

### ***Building and Sign Appearance***

#### ***Positives***

- *Numerous visually attractive structures, both new and rehabilitated existing structures.*
- *Opportunities for building and sign improvements through changes in use and rehabilitation.*
- *Residential buildings contribute to a distinctive corridor identity and scale and are appropriate for potential adaptive use.*
- *Distinctive York County entrance signs upon which to build a cohesive theme and plan.*
- *Some smaller, distinctive, well-landscaped and attractive signs.*

#### ***Opportunities for Improvement***

- *Widely mixed building types, character, siting and scale.*
- *Inappropriate remodeling and building additions that include a mixed use of materials, colors, and details.*
- *Many private signs are too numerous and/or too large.*
- *Many signs are uncoordinated, of inappropriate materials, are poorly placed or lack quality appearance.*
- *Overall lack of proper maintenance on many buildings and signs.*
- *Numerous vacant or underutilized sites and structures.*

### **Vision for the Route 17 Corridor**

Working from the existing conditions inventory, and hoping to respond to the charge of the Board of Supervisors, the Revitalization Committee discussed and developed the following future focus and vision:

*We envision Route 17 as a corridor where....:*

- Existing businesses can remain viable and flourish through growth and expansion;
- New businesses can be established and thrive;
- Existing and newly developed parcels contribute positively to the appearance of the corridor;
- Property owners take pride in the condition of their properties and keep them attractive and well-maintained;
- Existing deteriorated structures have been rehabilitated or demolished;
- Signs are well-maintained, attractive, tastefully designed, and subdued in terms of size and height;



- Monument-style signs with attractive landscaping around their bases are the preferred and predominant type;
- Signs associated with closed businesses and abandoned properties have been removed;
- Development regulations strike an appropriate balance between private property rights and establishing and protecting community character (i.e., where property can be developed to its highest potential, while at the same time ensuring that sufficient attention is given to compatibility with surroundings, appearance of buildings, signs, landscaping, etc);
- Medians, shoulders and other available areas of the VDOT right-of-way are landscaped with trees, shrubs, ornamental grasses, perennial and annual flowers and weed-free lawn areas in a consistent theme pattern, all of which are maintained to remain healthy and attractive;
- Unsightly utility lines have been placed underground;
- Adjoining property owners have agreed to share joint-access driveways in order to improve Route 17 traffic flow and safety conditions and to enable efficient and cost-effective site design;
- Parking lots and large expanses of asphalt are screened or buffered from view by low-profile landforms (berms), ornamental fences, shrubs, ornamental grasses or other landscaping;
- Efforts are made to protect and retain existing mature and healthy trees on a development site;
- Outdoor storage areas, dumpsters, building mechanical systems (HVAC units), loading docks and other potential unsightly features are screened from view from the corridor;

## **Recommendations for Action**

Based on its research, analysis and discussion, the Revitalization Committee has developed a series of *Action Options* that it recommends for consideration and implementation. These recommendations are summarized in the following list and are explained in greater detail in the individual action plans for each that follow this section. The Revitalization Committee believes that all of these actions are important to an effective and comprehensive Route 17 enhancement effort.

### **Action Options**

#### **Business Incentives**

- Develop and implement a program to provide property owners interested in renovating their sites or buildings with free or subsidized design assistance for changes in building facades, signage, landscaping or certain other site improvements (entrance drives, parking, etc.).
- Develop and implement, through the Industrial Development Authority, a Property Improvement Grant Program to assist in the cost of constructing building façade, landscaping, signage and/or entrance improvements on private properties.
- Develop and implement a tax exemption program for rehabilitation, renovation or replacement of commercial and industrial structures in the Route 17 corridor, as enabled by Section 58.1-3221.
- Develop an amendment to the York County Zoning Ordinance to create the Route 17 Commercial Revitalization Overlay District, the effect of which would be to establish incentives for the revitalization and redevelopment of “blighted” or “challenged” properties along the corridor. Incentives would be in the form of exceptions to some of the otherwise applicable development regulations such as setbacks, parking, signage, landscaping, etc. but with the stipulation that the property must be aesthetically improved.

#### **County Initiatives**

- Install additional “themed” landscaping improvements in medians, shoulders and other rights-of-way areas and fund the improvements through the VDOT Revenue Sharing Program or other available grant programs. Seek the donation of easements along the fronts of private properties to allow the Revenue Sharing funds (public \$\$) to be spent on landscaping

and entrance improvements within the easement area (and at no cost to the property owner).

- Develop and implement special landscaping/buffering improvements at strategic locations along the corridor to minimize the visual impact of certain land uses.
- Develop a plan to fund the placement of overhead utilities underground in conjunction with any VDOT widening project along the corridor. Alternatively, if funds are limited, attempt at a minimum to fund the installation of banks of conduit that will allow wires to be installed at a future date.
- Undertake additional County-sponsored/funded maintenance efforts within the VDOT right-of-way – tree and shrub maintenance, annuals and perennials, mulching and mowing.
- Identify and request the Industrial Development Authority to acquire, by donation or at minimal cost, maintenance and landscape easements on certain “blighted” and abandoned properties to allow the property to be improved through removal of old pavement, structures and debris and then to be regarded, landscaped and maintained, at County expense, in a more attractive and marketable condition. Designate an appropriate amount of funding, as determined by the Board of Supervisors, for this purpose from the County’s Economic Development Incentive Fund.
- Fabricate and install consolidated route number and directional/mileage signs on single panel formats similar to the style used in Williamsburg.
- Fabricate and install Block Number signs at the major intersections along the corridor to assist motorists in finding their way to business destinations. Mount the signs on the traffic signal mast-arm uprights.

## **Regulatory Reforms**

- Review the existing Automobile Graveyard ordinance (Section 5-1 through 5-30), modify and update it as deemed appropriate, and advertise it for public hearing and re-adoption in accordance with the terms of Section 15.2-903 of the Code of Virginia.

- Develop amendments to the York County Zoning Ordinance to adjust the list of uses permitted as a matter of right and by special use permit to ensure that those uses with the potential to have a significant impact on the aesthetic character of the corridor are afforded the special consideration associated with the Special Use Permit process.

A detailed description of each of these recommended actions follows:

### **Route 17 Corridor Enhancement Project**

#### **Action Item – Business Incentive:      Building and Site Design Assistance for Private Property Owners**

##### **Background:**

The Revitalization Committee’s inventory of Route 17 business properties has revealed a number of establishments that could benefit from site design or building façade enhancements. Undoubtedly, most business owners/operators are fully occupied with the day-to-day responsibilities of their particular establishment and often may not have the time, resources or inclination to think about “what-if” scenarios for improvements. However, studies have shown that façade improvements (storefronts, signs or awnings) can result in increased sales (November 1995, Technical Brief of Virginia Main Street Program). Furthermore, the improvements need not be expensive to make a noticeable difference – for example, repainting a façade, or installing a simple awning over a doorway or window, can often have a dramatic influence on appearance. The Committee believes that the important first step in making improvements is the visualization process, and it hopes that the availability of “free” design assistance may encourage property owners to take that “first step” toward improvement.

##### **Program Purpose and Goals:**

The goal of this program is to help property owners/business operators develop concepts for site and building improvements that will contribute to an overall enhancement of the appearance and character of the Route 17 corridor.

##### **Program Details and Implementation Plan:**

Under this proposed program, an overall design concept would be prepared for the Route 17 corridor to include suggestions on general types of “cosmetic” improvements that could be made to improve the appearance of properties. Preliminary inquiries have been made with Hampton University about the

possibility of this design exercise being undertaken by one of its architectural program classes. The Hampton University architectural program has undertaken similar studies for other area jurisdictions.

The general design concept would serve as the springboard for more detailed discussions with individual property owners who might be interested in improvement projects and particularly those who might be interested in the Property Improvement Grant Program. Free design assistance would continue to be offered to assist individual property owners in defining and refining a specific improvement concept for their building/parcel. It is possible that this more detailed design assistance could be provided through an arrangement with Hampton University, or through an architectural services contract between the Industrial Development Authority and one or more local architectural firms/architects. In any event, the concept is that the design service would be free of charge (up to some specified ceiling amount) to the interested property owner.

**Funding Requirements:**

Yet to be determined. Dependent on whether arrangements can be developed with Hampton University or whether individual architectural firms will need to be engaged.

**Program Implementation Schedule:**

- September – October 2003 - Discuss / develop / initiate corridor design concept arrangement with Hampton University (tentative).

## **Route 17 Corridor Enhancement Project**

### **Action Item – Business Incentive:      Property Improvement Grant Program**

#### **Background:**

The majority of the businesses in the corridor are small “mom and pop” operations that generally have very little capital for improving the appearance of their property. In many cases the businesses are leasing the property and the owners have no motivation to improve the building and/or property. Many of the small strip centers in the corridor are leasing to small local businesses that do not pay high rents. The owners of these centers are not inclined to make major renovations since their current net operating profit is very low.

#### **Program Purpose and Goals:**

In order to stimulate reinvestment in the commercial property in the corridor, the Revitalization Committee recommends that financial assistance from the County’s Economic Development Fund be offered for a Route 17 Commercial Property and Building Improvement Incentive Program. This grant program is intended to provide a financial incentive for commercial property owners to improve building façades, signage, landscaping and general site conditions. The goal of the program is to improve the aesthetics and functionality of the corridor businesses in order to maintain and increase their economic viability.

#### **Program Details:**

Attached to this report is a draft of the Route 17 Commercial Property and Building Improvement Incentive Program. In summary, the program would offer matching funds (dollar for dollar) for façade improvements (up to \$20,000), for sign improvements (up to \$10,000), and for general property improvements (landscaping, parking, lighting etc.) (up to \$15,000). Additionally the program will offer free building façade improvement plans (through local universities or other sources) and free landscaping design services through an IDA-contracted landscape architect. The program would be administered by the IDA, and an IDA Route 17 Revitalization Program Review Committee must approve all plans using specific guidelines for the evaluation of each proposal.

#### **Program Implementation Plan:**

- September 2003 – contract with landscape designer and university to assist with business improvement plans; also, solicit input regarding the draft plan from business and property owners in the corridor

- October 2003 – finalize program elements and implement promotional campaign including hand delivering program brochures to all businesses in the corridor; also organize program review committee
- November 2003 – official program kick off with a special event at a location in the corridor, begin accepting applications

**Funding Requirements:**

Funding is proposed in the amount of \$300,000 from the Economic Development Fund for the 2003/2004 calendar year.

## **Route 17 Corridor Enhancement Project**

### **Action Item – Business Incentive:      Tax Exemption Program for Rehabilitation, Renovation or Replacement of Commercial and Industrial Structures**

#### **Background:**

Many commercial property owners in the corridor have owned the property for a long time and in part are hesitant to renovate or expand because improvements can result in increased real estate assessments and an increased tax burden. Section 58.1-3221 of the Code of Virginia provides authority for localities to provide for the partial exemption from real estate tax for commercial and industrial structures that are twenty (20) or more years of age. The exemption may be made available for a period not to exceed fifteen (15) years.

#### **Program Purpose and Goals:**

By providing a real estate tax exemption for property improvements to older commercial structures in the corridor, owners will have a real incentive to improve and maintain the quality of their property.

#### **Program Details:**

Section 58.1-3221 of the Code of Virginia provides the following specific guidelines for this program:

- Structure must be at least twenty (20) years old.
- Must have undergone substantial rehabilitation, renovation or replacement for commercial or industrial use.
- Exemptions may be restricted to properties located within an area designated by the Board of Supervisors.
- Board may establish additional criteria for determining whether properties qualify, including requiring that they be older than 20 years.
- May also provide for partial exemption in the case of property that has been substantially rehabilitated by complete replacement for commercial or industrial use, provided that the replacement structures exceed the former square footage by no more than 100%.
- The partial exemption provided by the Board may not exceed an amount equal to the increase in assessed value attributable to the rehabilitation, renovation or replacement or an amount up to 50% of the cost of the rehabilitation, whichever the Board specifies by ordinance.



- The exemption may commence on January 1<sup>st</sup> of the year following completion and run with the real estate for a period of 15 years, or such shorter time as prescribed by the Board.
- The Board may, at its option, establish an incremental / gradual annual reduction of the exemption amount in such manner as it deems appropriate.

The Revitalization Committee recommends that a program based on the Code guidelines be drafted and presented to the Board of Supervisors for consideration. The recommendation forwarded to the Board should include an analysis of the potential participation and the anticipated impact on tax revenues.

**Program Implementation Schedule:**

- September 2003 - Draft proposed ordinance in consultation with County Attorney.
- October / November 2003 - Distribute draft ordinance and analysis of potential participation to BOS for review and consideration.
- December 2003 - Public Hearing and potential adoption

## **Route 17 Corridor Enhancement Project**

### **Action Item – Business Incentive:      Route 17 Commercial Revitalization Overlay District**

#### **Background:**

From time to time, property owners along the Route 17 corridor have expressed concerns about the development standards established by the York County Code (primarily the Zoning Ordinance) and how some of those requirements discourage investment in revitalization or redevelopment efforts. As a result, some properties have remained in an underutilized or dilapidated condition and continue to have a “blighting” effect on the corridor. The Revitalization Committee believes that development and adoption of a revitalization overlay district may provide a way to encourage reinvestments in these “challenged” properties.

Typically, “overlay” districts are designed to impose additional and often more restrictive requirements on development within the covered area. However, the concept behind the Revitalization Overlay District is to provide opportunities and flexibility intended to stimulate reinvestment. To do so, it may be necessary to “relax” certain standard requirements that are identified as impediments or disincentives to redevelopment / rehabilitation investment.

#### **Program Purpose and Goals:**

The purpose of this initiative is to develop a proposed Zoning Ordinance amendment that will encourage and facilitate the effective and attractive rehabilitation and/or redevelopment of “blighted” or otherwise challenged development sites on the Route 17 corridor. The proposed “overlay” district will include a series of alternatives to the standard development regulations that would otherwise apply under current Zoning Ordinance standards. The intent of those alternative provisions will be to encourage the rehabilitation of properties in a manner that is attractive and compatible with its surroundings and that represents an improvement to the corridor.

#### **Program Details and Implementation Plan:**

A proposed draft of the Revitalization Overlay District is being developed and will be made available by the Committee in the near future.

#### **Program Implementation Schedule:**

- August/September 2003 - BOS review and discussion of draft and incorporation of any adjustments deemed necessary by Board.

- October 2003 - Formal referral to Planning Commission for review, public hearing and recommendation.
- November 2003 - Planning Commission public hearing and recommendation to BOS.
- December 2003 - BOS public hearing and adoption.

## **Route 17 Corridor Enhancement Project**

### **Action Item – County Initiative:            Additional Median and Shoulder Landscaping**

#### **Background:**

In 2000, the County installed median and shoulder landscaping along the segment of Route 17 extending from the Newport News City line to Route 134. The total cost of the project was \$150,000 (including the 1<sup>st</sup> year of maintenance), of which \$50,000 was funded by the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) through the Revenue Sharing Program. This landscaping is beginning to mature and has dramatically changed the character of the southern end of Route 17.

#### **Program Purpose and Goals:**

The goal of this proposed Action Item is to extend the public right-of-way planting effort to additional segments of Route 17 to enhance the appearance of the medians and shoulder areas. Additionally, this program will seek participation by private property owners by offering them an opportunity to donate a landscape easement along the front of their properties within which publicly-funded landscaping improvements could be installed.

#### **Program Details and Implementation Plan:**

With carryover funds from a previous Revenue Sharing allocation, plus an additional supplementary allocation approved in 2003, there is a total of \$220,180 available for additional landscaping improvements. Planting must be undertaken in accordance with VDOT standards, and a landscape plan must be prepared and submitted to VDOT for approval. Private property owners wishing to have landscape improvements made along the front of their property using these funds would need to donate a landscape easement to the Virginia Department of Transportation. Landscaping within medians and on shoulders would continue to use the basic layout and plant selections of the previous installations. Landscaping on the fronts of private properties would be designed to complement the median and shoulder planting schemes as well as the specific characteristics of the individual properties. Design fees for both the right-of-way and the participating private properties would be funded as a project cost.

- Landscaping at several of the median breaks south of Route 134 was designed, but not installed, as part of the 2000 project. Additionally, none of the landscape beds received the full treatment of annuals and perennials recommended in the landscaped design plans. Completion of these landscaped plans, and particularly the installation of the perennial and

annual flowers to give a “splash of color,” would significantly enhance the lower Route 17 appearance.

The estimated cost of completing all the landscaping south of Route 134 is \$192,000. To ensure that funds are available for other areas, the Revitalization Committee recommends that the following segments be completed first:

- NN city line to Coventry Boulevard – Perennials and bulbs - \$25,000
- Thomas Hundley to Route 171 – Perennials and bulbs - \$33,000

A bid request should be developed immediately to ensure that these areas could be planted in the fall of 2003. This effort should be coordinated with the York County Beautification Committee’s ongoing daffodil planting project and consideration should be given to combining available funds from both sources.

- Although the segment of Route 17 between Wolftrap Road and Route 134 is programmed for widening to 6 lanes, construction will not start until 2007 at the earliest. Therefore, the Revitalization Committee recommends that some of the basic median landscaping (Nandina, ornamental grasses, etc.) be installed at certain locations with recognition that the widening project may require relocation and transplanting of some of these plants in 2007. The following locations are recommended:

- Frances Circle intersection
- Ella Taylor Road intersection
- Lakeside Drive intersection
- York Crossing Drive intersection
- Dare Road intersection
- Wolftrap Road intersection
- Goodwin Neck Road / Denbigh Blvd intersection
- Old York Hampton intersection
- Fort Eustis Blvd intersection
- Battle Road intersection
- Cook Road intersection
- Goosley Road intersection

Assuming that the lower corridor planting plans are repeated at these locations, approximately \$60,000 should be allocated for this effort.

- In addition to the intersection and median break treatments, the Committee recommends that trees and shrubs (compatible with the lower Route 17 plant selections) be installed in the medians at the following locations:
  - Immediately north and south of Fort Eustis Boulevard \*\*\*
  - On the north side (back side) of the variable message sign south of Fort Eustis Boulevard (i.e., to screen the unsightly sign back)
  - Immediately north and south of Goodwin Neck / Denbigh Boulevard \*\*\*
  - North of Wolftrap Road
  - Immediately north and south of Dare Road
  - Immediately north and south of York Crossing Drive
  - Immediately north and south of Lakeside Drive \*\*\*
  - Immediately north and south of Ella Taylor Road
  - North and south of Frances Circle

To landscape all of these segments with a basic complement of trees and shrubs would cost approximately \$40,000. Adding the “splash of color” treatment at the several “gateway” intersections (designated by \*\*\*) would add approximately \$75,000 to the cost.

- In addition, the Revitalization Committee recommends that a minimum of \$50,000 be reserved for use within any easements donated by private property owners interested in landscaping enhancements on the front of their parcels.

#### **Funding Requirements:**

Funding is approved and available from County CIP and VDOT Revenue Sharing Program; approved amount \$220,180. Implementing the above-noted recommendations would require approximately \$283,000. The Revitalization Committee recommends that additional funds be requested by the Board in the 2004 Revenue Sharing Program cycle to at least cover the \$63,000 funding gap.

#### **Program Implementation Schedule:**

- September 2003 – contract with landscape designer to prepare plans for VDOT review; also, solicit interest and easement donation from private property owners
- October 2003 – submit plans and proposed bid documents for VDOT review

- December 2003 – solicit bids for approved planting plans
- February 2004 – BOS and VDOT approval of bid award/procurement
- March 2004 – Request additional revenue Sharing Program funds
- March-May 2004 – landscape installation

## **Route 17 Corridor Enhancement Project**

### **Action Item – County Initiative:           Landscaping / Screening at Strategic Locations**

#### **Program Purpose and Goals:**

This program is proposed to complement the median and shoulder landscaping plans and would involve identifying one or more locations where “special” landscape treatments would be beneficial. “Special” landscape treatments might include the installation of annual and perennial flower beds at “gateways” or otherwise significant locations, or the installation of landforms, landscaping or even fencing to help improve the appearance of certain segments of the corridor by screening unattractive views.

#### **Program Details and Implementation Plan:**

The Revitalization Committee has identified several locations for consideration. Ideally, landscape improvements would be able to be accomplished within the Route 17 right-of-way. Where sufficient area is not available in the right-of-way, easements would need to be acquired from private property owners, thus opening the opportunity for use of VDOT Revenue Sharing Program funds. Locations proposed for special treatment by the Revitalization Committee are:

- Priority 1 – Automobile Salvage Yards – The Revitalization Committee believes that the frontage of the automobile salvage yards on the east side of Route 17 could be improved considerably with the installation of landscaping between the back of the roadside ditch and the right-of-way/property line. Planting options would be expanded considerably if the property owners were willing to donate a landscape easement. The Committee has developed a proposed plan for the shoulder along this segment of the corridor that would include a combination of earthen berms and landscaping with shrubs and trees. This landscaping would help to buffer views of the salvage yards from Route 17. (*Note: See Action Item No. 14 concerning the possible actions that the Commonwealth Transportation Commissioner could take with respect to the automobile salvage yards. Because federal-aid funding is not likely to be available for such VDOT-initiated actions, the Committee recommends proceeding with this local initiative.*)

One additional option for this area, subject to cooperation and participation by the businesses, would be installation of a consistent type and quality of screening fence along the storage yard frontages and



the consolidation/rehabilitation of some of the driveway entrances (i.e., install VDOT standard commercial entrances). Both of these initiatives could be funded as “streetscape” improvements through the VDOT Revenue Sharing Program if the property owners were willing to provide a maintenance / construction easement to VDOT.

- Priority 2 - Abandoned house at intersection of Coventry Boulevard and Route 17. - This abandoned property is one of the major eyesores identified and discussed by the Revitalization Committee. In the event efforts to have the building renovated or demolished are not successful, the Committee recommends that a planting plan be developed to help screen/buffer views of it from Route 17. It appears that an appropriate planting plan could be undertaken within the area of the existing right-of-way.
- Priority 3 - Entry from Newport News – The area around the York County entry sign at the Newport News city line is landscaped and refreshed on a seasonal basis with annual flowers. The Revitalization Committee recommends that a plan be developed and implemented to enhance the planting beds for annual flowers around this sign and extending further northward. This “splash of color” would change on a seasonal basis and would provide a major visual statement at this major entry into York County.
- Priority 4 - Median North of Cook Road – The median just north of Cook Road is relatively wide and flat and the Revitalization Committee believes it would be an appropriate area for a “splash of color” since it marks the approximate northern end of the commercial section of the corridor. Although there are a few commercial parcels north of this point, the Cook Road intersection marks the southbound “entry” point into the more intensely developed segments of the corridor.
- Priority 5 – Landmark Feature – The Revitalization Committee believes that one or more “landmark features”, such as a flagpole array, should be established along the corridor. It would be difficult, if not impossible, to secure VDOT approval for a flagpole within the highway right-of-way so donation of an easement on private property would likely be necessary to implement such a plan. Total cost for a three-flagpole, lighted arrangement (American, State and County flags comparable to the arrangement in front of the Courthouse) is estimated to be \$25,000, including site work and landscaping (with a “splash of

color”). The Committee recommends that the Board of Supervisors provide 50% of the funding for this project and that the York County Chamber of Commerce be requested to undertake a fund-raising campaign to provide the remainder of the funds.

- Priority 6 - Washington Square Shopping Center Median – The grassed median in front of Washington Square Shopping Center is relatively wide and flat and the Committee believes it would be an appropriate mid-corridor area for another “splash of color.”

#### **Funding Requirements:**

Funding is approved and available from County CIP and VDOT Revenue Sharing Program; approved amount \$220,180. However, the improvements described in recommended in Action Item #1 would consume all (and more) of the amount available. Therefore, the Committee recommends that additional funds be requested by the Board in the 2004 Revenue Sharing Program cycle to continue the landscaping efforts described above and that supplementary County funds be appropriated immediately to allow pursuit of the salvage yard frontage and flagpoles initiatives. The flagpole project would not be eligible for Revenue Sharing Program funding. Any County contribution for this project would require a special appropriation by the Board of Supervisors.

#### **Program Implementation Schedule:**

- September 2003 – contract with landscape designer to prepare plans for VDOT review (and flagpole arrangement design); also, solicit interest and easement donation from private property owners
- October 2003 – submit plans for VDOT review; Request Chamber to undertake fund-raising campaign;
- March/April 2004 – Request additional Revenue Sharing Program funds and consider supplementary County funding
- July 2004 – Develop landscape plans and bid documents based on amount of funding available
- October 2004 – Advertise for bids
- March – May 2005 – Landscape installation

## **Route 17 Corridor Enhancement Project**

### **Action Item – County Initiative:            Underground Utilities**

#### **Background:**

Overhead utility lines along Route 17 add to the visual clutter, detract from the appearance of even the best looking and best maintained properties, and limit the type and size of the landscaping that can be planted along the road shoulder and the fronts of properties. In addition, the overhead lines are subject to damage from automobile accidents (poles hit and snapped) and during storms (from limbs or trees falling across the lines). The segments of Route 17 where utilities have been placed underground (e.g., in front of Washington Square and Grafton Shopping Centers) are noticeably more attractive as a result. Unfortunately, the cost of putting existing lines underground is extremely high and, while the County has set aside a small sum (\$50,000) in the annual Capital Improvements Program Budget for several years, the available amount is a “drop in the bucket” in relation to the amount that would be required for all of Route 17.

At the Board of Supervisors’ request, the Virginia Department of Transportation has established a \$31 million project in the Statewide Transportation Improvement Plan to widen Route 17 from Wolftrap Road to Route 134 from four to six lanes. The Revitalization Committee believes that this widening project, which will necessitate relocation of the existing overhead utility lines, presents a “golden opportunity” to consider undergrounding for a major segment of Route 17.

#### **Program Purpose and Goals:**

The goal of this proposed Action Item is to facilitate the elimination of overhead utility lines on a major segment (Wolftrap Road to Route 134) of the Route 17 corridor. The major objective of this effort is to improve the reliability of utility service along a segment of Route 17 by eliminating the possibility of damage to lines and poles from vehicles, trees and storm events. A companion objective is to realize significant aesthetic benefit from the elimination of the unsightly overhead wires, transformers and supporting poles.

#### **Funding Requirements:**

According to estimates prepared by the Virginia Department of Transportation, the cost of undergrounding the utilities (electric, telephone and cable) for the Wolftrap Road to Route 134 segment of Route 17 is \$5,775,000. Although the utilities will have to be relocated to accommodate the road widening, VDOT funding policies will not allow the widening project budget to cover the cost of undergrounding. Instead, the widening project budget will cover the cost of moving existing

overhead service to a new overhead location. However, if the County is willing to fund the cost of undergrounding the utilities that must be moved as part of a road project, VDOT will provide a “credit” in the amount it would have otherwise spent for relocated overhead service. In the case of the subject segment of Route 17, the “credit” from the project budget would be \$1,885,000, leaving a total of \$3,890,000 as the local responsibility.

Alternatives to fully undergrounding the entire segment would include doing only selected segments (costs would depend on the segments selected) or simply installing conduit through which wires could be pulled at some future date (estimated cost to install parallel conduit for the entire Wolftrap to Rt. 134 segment - \$500,000).

When undergrounding is done in conjunction with a programmed road improvement project (as is the case here), it is eligible for funding through the Revenue Sharing Program administered by VDOT.

**Program Details and Implementation Plan:**

VDOT’s current projections are that construction on the widening project will begin, at the earliest in 2007. According to VDOT representatives, the utility relocation process will take about 18 months and must be completed before the roadway construction begins. Thus, funding for any utility work (full undergrounding or conduit) would need to be available by mid-2005 (beginning of FY 2006).

A FY 2006 funding deadline means that there are two available Revenue Sharing Program allocation cycles to work with. The County’s annual allocation limit is \$500,000 and the Board has previously agreed that \$200,000 of that amount will be earmarked for stormwater management projects. Therefore, if the Board were to request at that least \$125,000 (to be matched by equal amounts from VDOT) in each of the next two allocation cycles be earmarked for undergrounding, a total of \$500,000 could be available by FY 2006 to support installation of conduit along the entire length of the project.

**Required Actions:**

The Revitalization Committee recommends that the Board of Supervisors request at least \$125,000 in its FY 2005 and 2006 Revenue Sharing Program requests to support this effort. The Committee also recommends that the Board consider finding other supplementary funding sources to allow actual undergrounding of selected segments.

**Program Implementation Schedule:**

- September 2003 - Notify VDOT of intention to fund at least \$500,000 for conduit installation
- March 2004 and March 2005 - Apply for Revenue Sharing Program funding

## **Route 17 Corridor Enhancement Project**

### **Action Item – County Initiative: Additional County Funded Maintenance**

#### **Background:**

Since 1999, the County has supplemented VDOT's mowing and litter pick-up efforts on portions of the Route 17 corridor. The County program initially depended on workforces provided by the Virginia Peninsula Regional Jail and concentrated on the segments south of Route 134. However, over the past several years it has been extended northward as much as manpower (Jail and County) and equipment resources will allow. Currently, the program includes weekly mowing of the median from Dare Road to the Newport News city line and from the Coleman Bridge to Goosley Road.

#### **Program Purpose and Goals:**

The goal of this proposed Action Item is to ensure a consistent frequency and quality of maintenance (mowing and litter pick-up) along the entire Route 17 corridor.

#### **Program Details and Implementation Plan:**

The Revitalization Committee believes that a well-manicured and litter-free median along the entire Route 17 corridor would produce a noticeable improvement in the corridor's appearance. Due to funding constraints, VDOT is able to mow (through contractual services) only three to four times during the growing season (March through October). Conversely, on the segments where the County has taken over maintenance, mowing occurs on a weekly or semi-weekly frequency – which is the frequency necessary to produce the well-manicured appearance.

The County currently provides manpower and equipment resources to support the existing mowing and litter pick-up efforts. Expanding the program to cover the entire corridor would require that additional County staff resources, or contract services, be allocated. Estimates concerning the additional funding needed to support an expanded effort are currently being prepared and will be made available to the Board of Supervisors for consideration.

#### **Funding Requirements:**

The Revitalization Committee recommends that the Board of Supervisors include sufficient funding in the FY 2005 Budget to allow the mowing program to be expanded to cover the entire Route 17 corridor.

## **Route 17 Corridor Enhancement Project**

### **Action Item – County Initiative:      Acquisition of Maintenance and Landscape Easements on Blighted Properties**

#### **Background:**

For various reasons commercial and residential properties in the corridor sometime become vacant and are not maintained properly. These situations range from vacant lots that are not mowed frequently enough to commercial structures that become dilapidated and are prime graffiti targets. Code enforcement efforts sometimes work in these cases but often are very ineffective particularly without the adoption of a comprehensive property maintenance ordinance (see Action Item #7). In 1997 the County was faced with a situation like this next to the Yorktown Library. An old service station was abandoned and an out of town owner was not maintaining the property. County staff was able to get the owner to raze the structure but not clean up and maintain the grounds. In order to accomplish this the County got the owner to agree to sign a landscaping and maintenance easement that allowed County staff to remove the debris on the property, plant shrubs and grass, and properly maintain the grounds.

#### **Program Purpose and Goals:**

The purpose of this item is to selectively use this tool to address problem properties where all other avenues have failed. The goal is to effect significant aesthetic improvements to the targeted property in order to stop its blighting influence and facilitate the properties sale and renovation.

#### **Program Details:**

The language for a landscape and maintenance easement has been completed and possible target properties have been identified.

#### **Implementation Plan:**

This program could be implemented as soon as agreements are reached with the property owners.

#### **Funding Requirements:**

The County will have to determine the cost of providing the additional maintenance and clean up. Additional funds would have to provided to General Services.

## **Route 17 Corridor Enhancement Project**

### **Action Item – County Initiative:      Route Marker and Directional/Information Signage Replacement**

#### **Background:**

Several years ago, the City of Williamsburg implemented a comprehensive replacement plan for all of its route marker and directional signs. The purpose of this program was to improve the appearance and readability of the signs, while at the same time decreasing their size and total number. As a result of the success and reception of the Williamsburg effort, James City County and York County have been working with VDOT to convert additional signs within the area bounded by Route 199 to the “Williamsburg” format and color scheme (or, as close to the Williamsburg color as VDOT will allow). The Revitalization Committee believes that the format of the signs being used in the Williamsburg area would be very appropriate for the Route 17 corridor and would help improve aesthetics.

#### **Program Purpose and Goals:**

The purpose of this recommended Action Item is to improve the appearance and readability of the route marker and directional signs along the Route 17 corridor. Consolidation and downsizing of the signs will improve appearances, reduce sign clutter and improve visibility of businesses along the corridor.

#### **Program Details and Implementation Plan:**

This program would involve a comprehensive sign replacement program along the entire length of the Route 17 corridor. All route marker and directional / mileage signs would be converted to the “Williamsburg” format (single sign panel with smaller route emblems), subject to VDOT approval. The County would administer the sign design and fabrication process and VDOT would be asked to administer the removal and installation process.

#### **Funding Requirements:**

This program would be eligible for funding through the VDOT Revenue Sharing Program. The Revitalization Committee recommends that the area from the Newport News City line to Route 134 be designated as the first phase effort and that the Board of Supervisors request a Revenue Sharing Program allocation of \$50,000 (\$25,000 VDOT/\$25,000 County) in the next allocation cycle (March 2004). This amount should be more than adequate to cover the first phase area and would then allow the program to progress northward as far as possible.



**Program Implementation Schedule:**

- September – December 2003 - Prepare Existing Sign Survey and Redesign Concepts – County staff and VDOT.
- January – March 2004 - VDOT review and approval.
- March 2004 - Submit 2004 Revenue Sharing Program funding request (\$50,000).
- October 2004 - Revenue Sharing Program funding becomes available.
- October 2004 – May 2005 - Order signs and install.

## **Route 17 Corridor Enhancement Project**

### **Action Item – County Initiative:           Block Number Signs**

#### **Background:**

Section 20-35 of the York County Code requires that street address numbers at least 4 inches in height be displayed over or near the front entrance to all commercial and industrial buildings. However, even when property owners comply with this requirement, it is sometimes difficult to locate a specific property. Some businesses have placed their street address numbers on their freestanding business identification sign along the street frontage, and this certainly helps in locating them and even neighboring properties. However, the Revitalization Committee believes that more locational assistance is necessary and desirable.

#### **Program Purpose and Goals:**

The purpose of this Action Item is to improve the ability of motorists to locate specific addresses along the Route 17 corridor. Doing so will be good for business and will also help to improve traffic safety by minimizing the need for motorists to search for address clues as they drive along the corridor.

#### **Program Details and Implementation Plan:**

This program will involve the fabrication of Block Number signs to be placed at the major intersections along Route 17. The signs (see attached example) will indicate the beginning number of the address sequence for each major segment of the corridor. Signs will be fabricated by the County's Sign Shop (Department of General Services) and will be installed in coordination with VDOT on the mast arm signal uprights or other appropriate posts.

#### **Funding Requirements:**

Fabrication costs will amount to approximately \$500 and this funding is available in the approved Capital Improvements Budget. The Board of Supervisors has authorized staff to proceed with this project.

#### **Program Implementation Schedule:**

- August – September 2003 - Fabrication of signs.
- October – November 2003 - Installation (contingent on VDOT availability).

## **Route 17 Corridor Enhancement Project**

### **Action Item – Regulatory Reforms:    Review / Update / Re-Adopt the Automobile Graveyard Ordinance**

#### **Background:**

The current version of the County's Automobile Graveyard and Junkyard Ordinance (Chapter 5, York County Code) was adopted on October 5, 1978. Since that time, compliance by the operators has been inconsistent, at best. Many believe that the automobile graveyards (salvage yards) located south of Victory Boulevard represent the greatest visual challenge on Route 17. Despite their appearance, the salvage yards represent viable business enterprises and they are somewhat of a necessity in our automobile-oriented society. Therefore, the Revitalization Committee believes it is necessary to assume that they will remain in place for the foreseeable future and, accordingly, that strategies should be developed to make them as attractive as possible.

The Revitalization Committee believes that some of the other, non-regulatory, Action Items being recommended have the potential to result in significantly improved appearances for these properties. Ideally, improvements will come through the participation of the salvage yard operators in some of the assistance programs being proposed (e.g., Property Improvement Grant Program, Landscape Easement Program). However, the Committee believes it is also important to have well-founded and up-to-date regulatory standards in place.

Common observations about the Automobile Graveyard properties include:

- Large numbers of vehicles in various states of disrepair parked or stored within view of Route 17.
- Haphazard placement of vehicles in front areas.
- Absence or poor condition of screening fences.
- Entrances and parking areas have potential for improvement.
- Absence of landscaping.
- Potential environmental issues
- Condition, appearance and maintenance of buildings could be improved.

As noted above, the current ordinance was adopted (and last reviewed) over 25 years ago. The Committee believes that a thorough review of the existing ordinance is warranted to ensure that it adequately addresses issues associated with these observations while respecting the operational needs of the automobile graveyard businesses.

**Program Purpose and Goals:**

The ultimate goal of this Action Item is to enhance the appearance of the salvage yards along lower Route 17, either through a public-private cooperative effort or through regulatory persuasion.

**Program Details and Implementation Plan:**

The Revitalization Committee recommends that the Board of Supervisors appoint a Study Committee composed of representatives from the Industrial Development Authority, Planning Commission, Beautification Committee, York County Chamber(s) of Commerce, salvage yard owners, and citizens to:

- review the current Automobile Graveyard and Junkyard Ordinance;
- collect examples of similar ordinances from other locations;
- develop recommendations for improvements/changes to the existing provisions; and
- present a report and recommendations to the Board of Supervisors for consideration.

**Program Implementation Schedule:**

- September 2003 – Appoint Study Committee (BOS)
- October 2003 – February 2004 – Study Committee research and deliberations
- March 2004 – Committee Report and Recommendations to BOS
- May 2004 – Public Meeting(s) to discuss proposed changes (if any)
- June 2004 – Board of Supervisors public hearing on proposed ordinance changes (if any).

## **Route 17 Corridor Enhancement Project**

### **Action Item – Regulatory Reforms:      Zoning Ordinance Review – Permitted and Special Use Permit Land Uses on Route 17**

#### **Background:**

The Zoning Ordinance was revised and re-adopted in 1995 and at that time the majority of the corridor was reclassified from the former CC and CG classifications to the current CG – General Commercial district. The CG provides for a wide range of commercial uses – some as a matter of right and some by Special Use Permit. While the current listing and mix of uses seems to be operating reasonably well, the Revitalization Committee believes that there may be opportunities for adjustments that would contribute to the goal of improving the appearance and economic vitality of the corridor.

#### **Program Purpose and Goals:**

The goal of this Action Item is to review the list of uses permitted under the current zoning classifications applied to Route 17 and to determine if changes should be recommended in order to improve compatibility among uses and to ensure that uses will not detract from the appearance and economic viability of the corridor.

#### **Program Details and Implementation Plan:**

The Revitalization Committee recommends that the Board of Supervisors appoint a study committee composed of representatives of the Industrial Development Authority, Planning Commission and Chamber of Commerce to review the list of land uses permitted along the Route 17 corridor, as well as the accompanying performance standards, and to make recommendations for any adjustments deemed necessary to ensure economic vitality and aesthetic quality. Specifically, the committee should review the situations under which uses are allowed (matter-of-right or special use permit) and whether or not the current provisions provide the Board of Supervisors with the tools necessary to ensure a high-quality, attractive business environment on Route 17. The committee should examine techniques being used by other jurisdictions along their highly-visible commercial corridors such as, for example, the use permit requirements imposed by Newport News to ensure the restoration of abandoned gas station sites.

#### **Program Implementation Schedule:**

- September 2003 - Board of Supervisors appoints Study Committee

- October – December 2003 - Study Committee research and deliberations
- February 2004 - Committee report to Board of Supervisors
- March 2004 - BOS initiates Zoning Ordinance text amendment application; Referral to Planning Commission for review and public hearing
- April 2004 - Planning Commission public hearing and recommendation to BOS
- May 2004 - Board of Supervisors public hearing and adoption

## **Summary**

In summary, the Committee is recommending the following:

1. Establishing business incentives to offer:
  - Free design assistance to businesses interested in property improvements;
  - Matching Grant funding for implementing improvements;
  - Tax exemption for value enhancements associated with renovations;
  - Zoning Ordinance changes to better accommodate improvement and redevelopment of challenged properties.
2. Tasking and providing funding for the Industrial Development Authority to negotiate landscape/maintenance easements to facilitate rehabilitation of abandoned and “blighted” properties.
3. Seeking special legislation in the 2004 General Assembly to allow the County to adopt a blight elimination program (Volume II, Statewide Building Code) on the Route 17 corridor, but not countywide.
4. Allocating previously approved, and requesting new, allocations of Revenue Sharing Program funds from VDOT, as follows:

<b>Purpose</b>	<b>2003 Approved</b>	<b>2004 Request</b>	<b>2005 Request</b>
Median, shoulder and strategic location landscaping, fencing, etc.	\$220,180	\$63,000	??
Underground utilities – Conduit		\$250,000	\$250,000
Route marker sign replacement program (and block # signs)		\$50,000	??
<i>Note: County and VDOT each contribute 50% of the listed amounts</i>			

5. Allocating additional County funds to increase the scope of County mowing and maintenance along the corridor.

6. Forming Study Committees, appointed by the Board of Supervisors, to:

- Review the existing Automobile Graveyard ordinance (committee membership to include auto graveyard owners/operators)
- Review the Zoning Ordinance to look specifically at the list of uses allowed on the corridor, whether by right or by special use permit, to ensure the proper mix for economic vitality and corridor character.

The Route 17 Revitalization Committee sincerely appreciates the opportunity to participate in this process and to offer its recommendations to the York County Industrial Development Authority and the York County Board of Supervisors.

Attachments:

- *Proposed* Route 17 Commercial Property and Building Improvement Incentive Program



## **Attachment 1**

### **Route 17 Commercial Property and Building Improvement Incentive Program**

#### **Purpose**

The purpose of the Route 17 Property and Building Improvement Incentive Program is to encourage enhancements to existing commercial properties through improvements that are designed and undertaken in a manner that will improve the economic viability of the commercial enterprise from a functional and aesthetic perspective. The program is intended to stimulate additional investments in properties on Route 17 and to contribute toward the enhancement of the appearance of individual participating properties and the Route 17 Corridor as a whole. The program will be administered by the York County Industrial Development Authority and the Route 17 Revitalization Committee in support of its mission to preserve and improve the business climate in the corridor.

#### **Program Elements**

The Improvement Incentive Program consists of the following different types of assistance opportunities for business owners on Route 17.

*Design Assistance:* Architectural design consultation can be made available through the services of \_\_\_\_\_ University at no charge to the business owner. Architectural designs for improving the façades of many of the businesses on Route 17 have been completed by faculty and students at \_\_\_\_\_ University. Landscaping designs for the front yards of many businesses that mesh with the existing or planned landscaping for the Route 17 median prepared by the IDA's consultant are also available at no charge to the business owner.

*Façade Improvement Assistance:* Grants are available for qualified exterior rehabilitation/renovation of the facades of commercial structures. Eligible improvements include, but are not limited to, corrective maintenance, new paint, siding, roofing, etc., and structural changes intended to improve the appearance and usefulness of the structure. Preference will be given to grant requests that implement the façade recommendations prepared by \_\_\_\_\_ University. The maximum amount any façade improvement grant will be 50% of the total cost of the improvement or \$20,000, whichever is less.

*Sign Improvement Assistance:* Grants are available to assist in the design and fabrication of new or renovated signage for businesses. Preference will be given to grant requests that reduce the size of total signage and the establishment or renovation of ground-mounted monument signs. The maximum amount of any sign improvement grant will be 50% of the total cost of the sign work or \$10,000, whichever is less.

*General Property Improvement Assistance:* Grants are available for business properties to cover various types of site improvements including, but not limited to, landscaping, lighting, entrances, sidewalks and parking areas. Preference will be given to grant requests that implement the landscape plan prepared by the IDA's consultant and entrance improvements that comply with VDOT's entrance closure plan. The maximum amount of any general property improvement grant will be 50% of the cost of the improvement, or \$15,000 whichever is less. Grant requests for entrance improvements in accordance with VDOT's entrance closure plan may be eligible for grants equal to 50% of the cost of the improvement, or \$\_\_\_\_\_ whichever is less.

### **Eligibility and Procedural Guidelines**

1. The applicant must own a business on Route 17. The applicant may be the property owner or tenant. A tenant must have the property owner's signed approval. Grant funds are available on a one-time-only basis under each category for each property.
2. Grant funds will be disbursed to the applicant upon satisfactory completion of the project and submission of all receipts for work performed.
3. Completion of the project must occur within one year of the grant award.
4. Grant funds may be used as a match for other grant programs as long as the IDA grant does not exceed 50% of the matching requirement.
5. Project descriptions and designs must be submitted to the Route 17 Revitalization Program Review Committee for review and approval.

### **Selection Criteria**

Selection criteria to be used by the Route 17 Revitalization Program Review Committee in evaluating applications for assistance shall include:

1. The aesthetic quality of the project and its design. The positive economic impact the improvements will have on the business operation.
2. Potential impact on the attractiveness of the Route 17 Corridor, the streetscape and the particular building/property.
3. The significance of the enhancement to the Route 17 Corridor.
4. The conformance of the project to corridor objectives such as landscape coordination with median improvements, VDOT entrance closure plans, reduced or transition to ground mounted monument signage and improvements that are generally in accordance with the Route 17 Cox Study.

### **Publicity and Acknowledgement**

Applicants will receive public recognition for participating in the program. If appropriate, a sign will be placed on the property identifying the project as being affiliated with the Route 17 Revitalization Program. Upon satisfactory completion of the project, the applicant will receive a commendation from the Industrial Development Authority.

### **Funding**

The Industrial Development Authority has appropriated \$300,000 for the program for FY04.

### **Application Information**

Anyone interested in this program should contact the York County Office of Economic Development at 890-3317 or e-mail [econdev@yorkcounty.gov](mailto:econdev@yorkcounty.gov).